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Rev. Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan, Board Chair**

Written Testimony in Opposition to SB 175 – Public Employee Right to Choose Act
Senate Commerce Committee, Sen. Julia Lynn, chair
March 18, 2019

Mme. Chair, members of the committee –

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.

My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber; I am the executive director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multi-faith issue advocacy organization that brings a moral voice to Kansas public policy by educating, engaging and advocating on behalf of people of faith and the public regarding critical social, economic, and climate justice issues.

Kansas Interfaith Action opposes SB 175. We base our opposition on the following four principles:

- 1) We support the right of workers to organize. The right to form, organize, or join a union is a fundamental and internationally-recognized human right, listed in the 1948 United Nation’s Declaration of Human Rights – and this right is recognized in Kansas law as well.. This right is recognized by the denominations that make up the membership of KIFA, as exemplified is this statement by the United Church of Christ’s General Synod XXI meeting in 1997:

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Twenty-first General Synod reaffirms the heritage of the United Church of Christ as an advocate for just, democratic, participatory and inclusive economic policies in both public and private sectors, including ... the responsibility of workers to organize for collective bargaining with employers regarding wages, benefits, and working conditions, and the responsibility of employers to respect not only worker rights but also workers’ dignity, and to create and maintain a climate conducive to the workers’ autonomous decision to organize.

- 2) This includes public sector unions, which are vital both in terms of protecting the rights of their members and as represents and advocates for the public interest. We have seen this in recent months as teachers’ unions in places like Colorado, Oklahoma and California have used their collective voice to advocate for adequate public-school funding. Often the public interest has no other voice, and it must be protected.
- 3) Kansas is already a right-to-work state, and any individual can join the union or not; therefore, this bill is not necessary.
- 4) The requirement in this bill that an employee could cease union dues payments or quit their union at any time (as opposed to on a yearly basis) would open employees to an unceasing campaign of

intimidation, either by supervisors who are hostile political appointees or by rightwing organizations with the funding, staff and ideological commitment to undermine unions, particularly public employee unions. Public employees shouldn't have to work under such hostile circumstances.

KIFA believes that public employees have the right to join and to belong to a union; that such unions have an important role both in the lives of their members and in representing the interests of the general public; and that such memberships should be a private arrangement between the union and its members, without undue interference or intimidation by people or organizations who don't agree with these principles. We believe that SB 175 is opposed all these principles, and is intended to weaken public employee unions, largely for political purposes. Therefore we oppose SB 175, and urge this committee to vote it down.

Thank you for your attention.